

ZAvivors: ArC (version: DELTA)

by Vibro

Dedicated to the World Citizen, may your thirst for wisdom and peace be undying.

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Spaceling Charter

I am a Spaceling, I come in peace.

I ask you honor my space so I may
exhibit the ways I govern my space peacefully.
In return I will honor your space with the
expectation that you will do the same.

Know, if you are ever in need, it is my duty
to give you a helping hand and in doing so
never breaking my peace with the
expectation that you will do the same.

My goal is to learn, create, share, and
take the advent in order to be my purpose in life.
Let us have the same intentions so that
we may live a meaningful life.

=====

Tac (Michigan) Ex Delta, Rosh Vimel (India), Della (Arizona), T(Hollywood), Father Michael Frank, Ursa (Germany), Cassandra (Cassie) Vimel (NYC) + Digo (classmate, Italy) Luke (Cassie's Dog) Bill R&D (ArC), Gloria Vimel, Sandar (classmate) Captain Christian Cross (Gabi's right hand man)

Foreword:

Introduction:

Image ideas are in purple ctrl + f and search [image

Chapter 1: Lively Registration

[image:

-Cassandra's birthday gift, the 'speaking stones'; five marble like objects with five different colors

-Image of T-Intersection sign :Oslo 45 miles" to the left and "Indigo Falls / New Haven 31 miles

-image of lively auditorium at class registration

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The alarm must have been buzzing for several minutes as it reads 6:20 AM Friday June 20th, when finally Gloria knocks on Cassie's door and says

"Cassandra get your shower and come down breakfast is ready, okay?." Cassie grumbles under her breath.

"Okay", she said as gets up and walks towards her bathroom.

A child of luxury, she did not have to walk very far as her shower is connected to her bedroom accessible from both her bedroom and the hallway inside the house. She gets up and washes her face still sleepy from the late-night cram session for her psychology quiz. A bookworm by nature and with support of her parents she earned a full scholarship to any school she wanted due to acing her SATs. Although, the wealth her parents accumulated would have granted her the same opportunity, she was not raised to be dependent. A part of her still had the need to be close to family.

The shower was the usual blistering hot water that left her tan skin a blush color for the ten minutes of torture she called purifying the soul. Knowing well that her mother Gloria would disapprove of her shower ritual, Cassie never spoke about it and how it reminds her to feel once again if only for a few moments. It was her way to be closer to her Hindu ancestry as it is said that a periodic pilgrimage to the river Ganges for a purifying dip in the bitter cold waters

cleanses the soul.

transition

Walking downstairs she notices the snow coming down pretty hard as she looked out of her window.**image** The tree tops were getting covered in snow, making them look a bit like frosted gingerbread cookies.

"Hi mom," she says.

"Good morning, Cass" her mother replies as she walks up to her, kisses her on the cheek and says "I love you." Gloria knew this time of the year was bad for her daughter so she did her best to comfort Cassie. "You were up late, is everything okay?" " I saw the light on in your bedroom well after 2 this morning." She continued.

"Actually I have to submit an essay today and we have a quiz on Freud." "The essay I finished last week, so I was just making sure I did well for my quiz." Cassie replied.

"You know Cass, it would be good if you make friends, get involved with clubs or something. You are always studying." Complained her mother.

"You are one to talk, all you do is work." Was her reply. Eat your breakfast, I have something for you after you eat."

At this point, Cassie looked at the breakfast spread on the counter with her favorite. Scrambled eggs and lightly buttered toast, with slices of strawberries sprinkled in shredded swiss cheese, a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice and a bowl of oatmeal dashed with honey. Cassie was not a big eater but she loved this breakfast. Her father used to make it. He used to say, "Balance in life and life in balance." Upon serving his daughter her favorite food.

"Thanks mom." Cassie said.

"Don't thank me, it was all Tac." her mother replied.

"Where is Tac? He is usually in the kitchen reading his newspaper and drinking his coffee." asked Cassie.

"He is doing a quick check up on the car before he takes you to school. The weather is supposed to get nasty out there, with upwards of 8 inches of snow." Replied Gloria. "I would ask you to stay but they have not issued a white-out advisory and the roads are still clear."

While flicking through the television channels, she noticed the typical gloom and doom brought on by world affairs. The usual stock market fluctuations, bird-flu spreading and now

transmittable by humans, and terrorist attacks in random places. She grimly sighs and turns off the TV. Finishing her breakfast she whistles for her German shepherd Luke to give him the remaining scrambled eggs. Luke hurries into the kitchen wagging his tail.

"Calm, Luke." She says, as Luke stops moving. "Good boy, Luke, now sit." She continues. The well trained dog adheres to her command. She then places the unfinished breakfast on the floor in front of Luke and says "Wait, Luke." Luke does so. Finally Cassie says, "Okay boy, eat!" Luke quickly devours the plate of scrambled eggs.

It is at this point that a knock on the kitchen door that leads to the first floor came, and Tac opens the door.

"Oh hai, Tac. Thank you for the breakfast, it was delish." Cassie said.

"Good morning and you are welcome. I am glad you liked." He replied as he poured himself a cup of coffee. "We should leave in a few, I figure if we leave earlier we may be able to compensate for the heavy snowfall." Carried on Tac as he read his newspaper and sipped on his coffee. Sure Cassie said, "I will be ready in a few minutes, Let me grab my stuff and say bye to my mother."

Cassie goes back upstairs of her sprawling three story, 300 acre home built meticulously near water out in the country. She grabbed her bookbag and heavy winter coat, as the weatherman said it was 5 degrees Fahrenheit outside with snow all day.

"Mom!" She said.

"Over here." Replied a voice from the living room. Cassie walks down to the living room to see her mother standing near what appeared to be a clear spherical object with spots roundabout and a green triangle in the middle.

"Okay, it does not look like much, but it is a prototype. Press the green triangle in the middle." Requested her mom. Once pressed the object illuminated the room in a holographic environment showing Cassie as she was learning to walk, with her father saying, "Come here, Cassandra, that's it girl, keep walking. You are doing great", with each step that she took. At that moment Cassie's eyes filled with tears and she began to quietly cry.

"Happy Birthday, Cass." Gloria said as she hugged her daughter followed by "I love you."

Cassie wiping her tears said, "Thanks, Mom. I love you too."

"Bill from R&D put it together, it is one of a kind. I gave him all the family footage I could find for the project. He said he added footage about your father that he came across." Gloria said. "Oh before I forget, he said to come see him so he can show the bells and whistles." She continued.

"Okay, cool. Tell him I will and thank you very much. I have to get going, Tac said he wanted to leave early due to the weather." Cassie said.

"Okay, have a good day at school. Don't hesitate to call me if you need anything."

Cassie steps into the foyer leading to the front door and calls out for Luke.

"Come here, Luke." She yells. Luke hurries down the hall and sits by her side. "You watch over the house for me and behave yourself till I get back. And don't go wandering off because you know how it makes Tac worry." She instructs as Luke barks. "Thank you, Luke. See you soon."

Closing the door behind her she feels the ice-cold window smack her in the face as she steps down towards the parked black Suburban SUV waiting to take her to school. The trees and yard are blanketed with snow. The driveway and steps leading to the front door are clear as Tac does a good job of maintaining the house. Cassie opens the backdoor of the passenger side and sets her book bag on the seat. She then enters the truck from the passenger door and buckles her seat belt.

"I am ready." She says.

The trip to school is long as she lives thirty minutes from the highway in the "sticks" as she calls it. Then it is another thirty minutes to her school once she hits the highway. As usual, Tac is listening to the news, waiting for the traffic and weather reports.

"No news today, Tac. I kind of wanted to ask you some questions, if you do not mind". Said Cassie.

"Sure, let's ask." Tac turns down the radio. He made sure it was low enough to listen to both the radio and Cassie's line of questioning.

"For starters, how did you meet my father and what is your real name? I have known you all my life but don't know why and how." She posed.

Tac took a minute to pause and decided it best to start from the beginning. The snow was heavy but the roads were salty. You could hear the sound of the snow hitting the car since Tac drove with the window slightly cracked in order to listen for emergency vehicles.

"Firstly, I will say that your father was like a father to me. He came into my life when I was in a load of trouble and hurting greatly inside. Were it not for him, I would surely have led a life of crime or ended up killing someone." Tac was visibly troubled by his words, his jaw locking shut and clenching his lips, he continued "I was left as a newborn outside St. Mary Magdalene's emergency entrance on Christmas eve. It is said that I was premature weighing only 3 lbs 9

ounces. They did not know how long I was out there and were amazed I survived to begin with. New England can be harsh this time of year, especially accompanied by bitter Atlantic Ocean winds.

I was eventually let out of the neonatal ICU but not until I weighed 5 lbs due to the recurring upper respiratory infections and other complications. I had issues seeing as well, they were worried that I may be blind. They called me their "miracle baby". I do not really remember having any complications growing up. I was told that I may be asthmatic all my life, but that never stopped me. I did not see myself different than others. In fact, sister Martha, a nun at Beth as use boys called it, always told me I could do anything, in spite of my medical troubles. My earliest memories are from Bethesda's Youth Home which is an orphanage outside of Queens. It no longer exists.

It was actually replaced by a high-rise apartment building for low-income families. I was lucky, but did not know it at the time. Reading up on Beth, I found out that they were privately founded by someone called Gabi Group and that the funding stopped two years after my fifteenth birthday. Which was also around the time I found a foster family. I think I was told to leave because I started getting in trouble. I started to question life and authority. Being disrespectful and all that. It broke Sister Martha's heart.

Just then Tac remember's the paddling Sister Martha gave him for punching another youth for saying "Your father hates you so he dropped you off at the hospital." "You are breaking my heart John." Tac's hand covered his mouth then rubbed his chin. "John Smith", he said. Beth had a policy of openness. They said that it would help the boys become men by being able to learn from their past. So everyone's story was known. Some children were there due to violent, or abusive homes. Mostly no fault of their own. We were dealt a bad hand, we were told. The other boy not only got a fat lip but also had it washed out with soap for his role in the altercation. I have to admit, the sisters were hard on us, but fair. I remember Sister Martha's look just before she paddled me, that first and only time.

She said, "I raised you better than this."

As if for a split second taking on a motherly veil. Finally Cassie butts in

"Wow I had no idea. It must be hard for you to talk about this." Pulling up to the barren T-intersection. Tac glances at his watch and sees that they are on schedule. The sign reads "Oslo 45 miles" to the left and "Indigo Falls / New Haven 31 miles" to the right. The snow still falling steadily, the boxy SUV veers right.

[Image: T-Intersection sign :Oslo 45 miles" to the left and "Indigo Falls / New Haven 31 miles]

"Ah that's okay, the shitbird flies high above us with not a care in the world who it craps on, your

father used to say." Tac chuckled. "Anyway, I don't want to bore you, I have many stories. It's almost unreal to say I have lived some of them, but there's no denying."

"No please, continue." Cassie said.

"Alright so, Steven the boy I punched, told me about the cooking wine cabinet being left open and that we should get our drink on. So we went into the kitchen shortly after lights out and had our first taste of alcohol. Boy was that nasty, grimacing his face Tac continued. Anyway, Sister Martha found out about our escapade since she did morning roll call that day and walked up to vomited pillow case.

She simply said, "Get up, get cleaned, breakfast stops being served in ten minutes. you are not there you do not eat." In the most disappointed face you can imagine, Tac continued. One week later, I asked to go to the Admin Office at 1 PM on Friday. It was Good Friday actually. Hmm, Tac tallied as he recounted that fateful day. I walked in and it was Sister Martha writing on some papers on her neatly ordered desk.

"Have a seat, JS" as she would call me. Maybe that was her way to make my name seem less abandoned.

"Sister Martha, I said. I am sorry about the way I have been acting, I pro.." and just I was saying promise she interjected.

"There is a strict policy here in Bethesda of no alcohol. We have to adhere to these guidelines as the core goal of this organization is to help young men such as yourself walk upright in an often crooked world. Some of these young men have come to us from very harsh environments, so we are their last refuge from the big bad world. We take great care in our mission to ensure the perspective of our youth is untainted by their already tough beginnings into this world so that the rest of their lives can be lived with uprightness and conviction. The same conviction that led our Lord to sacrifice his life for the entire world. "Do you understand, JS?" She said,

"Wow, that was a mouth full." Cassie said.

"You're telling me!" Tac continued.

"So what happened?" Cassie asked.

"Well. I tried to ask for one more chance. Because it sounded like what was coming next was bad, but she wasn't having it." Tac continued.

"You have been assigned a Guardian Ad Litem by the state of New York, they will be here to pick you up by 5 PM. Please have your belongings ready and be here at the Admin Office by this time. Do you have any questions? She finished.

"Still in wrestling with the spirit of mischief. A part of me was pissed off, another sad and yet some part of me did not care. Really, I wanted to cry as it felt that I lost the only light in my life to the darkness. It is hard to explain." Tac said.

"It sounds like they ran a tight ship!" Cassie said.

"Oh yeah they did." Tac said. "Mrs. Harper showed up at 5 PM as scheduled and that was the last I saw of Beth and Sister Martha. Looking back on it, maybe it was me entering the darkness. I was a good kid until then. I was put into a foster home where my foster mom was a pill head and my foster dad drank a lot and would say things like,

"You are only here because we collect a check, remember this."

"What a jerk." Cassie shouted.

"Yep." Tac replied sharply as he drove up the long road entering New Haven University. A privately funded college that is the main source of income to this small agricultural community of the same name. To Tac's surprise the snow had let up a bit and the roads had been cleared.

"It's good to see the plowers doing their job." Tac said. "We can finish our chat some other time", he continues as the vehicle comes to a halt.

"That would be great. Let's do that." Cassie replies gingerly as she steps outside the car and zips up her coat. I only have two classes today, one of them is a lab that starts at 12:45 PM that is 1 Hour long. I sometimes get out early, could you be here by 1:30 PM if that is okay?" She asked sweetly.

"Sure. You want lunch or are you going to eat here?" Tac asked.

"I will just go to the cafeteria and have a salad or something before my lab. Thanks though!" Cassie replies as she puts on her bookbag and closes the rear passenger-side door. Tac lowered the passenger window to say goodbye.

"Okay then, sounds good. I will see you about 1:30 PM. Send me a text if anything changes." He says.

"Will do. And thanks." Cassie replies as she walks off towards Lively Auditorium.

Tac rolls the window back up and waits until Cassie walks into the building. He then drives to Lake Mirtha just behind the school as normally does. There he finishes reading his newspaper and continues to sip on his coffee. Today was a bit different, however since he was puzzled by Cassie's inquiry on his life. A usually reserved man, scientific in nature, that has seen and done enough in his lifetime for three men. He wondered what to say and how much to say. He also

thought about what Dr. Vimel would think if he asked him for advice concerning Cassie's inquiry. You see, due to there line of work honesty is sublime and objective. Their work mandated a need to know environment of the highest secrecy. Tac was dreading this day since there are things not even Gloria knew about their line of work. It is fair to say that Tac knew a side of Gloria's husband that she did not even know. Tac thinks to himself as he looks across the frozen over lake and the snow covered trees, "I hope that she forgets this mornings conversation and goes back to being her usual quiet self."

Tac then turns on the radio to his favorite AM talk show. *The Fight for Democracy*. They were just starting to cover this week in medicine when the headline is discussing a breakthrough in stem cell technology that allowed for a war veteran and amputee to regrow their limbs. The technology uses an undisclosed combination of a new stem cell technique and implanted censors that allows an individual to communicate with that newly regrown limb.

"Holy cow. That is amazing." Tac thought. "A second chance at life." Then turning his attention back to Cassie.

"I can't sugar coat this. She will know I'm full of shit." Tac thought to himself. He has been part of this family since before Cassie was born and they are practically the only family he has. He has no friends since the one friend he did have got his jaw broken by making some lewd comment concerning Dr. Vimel's recent passing and Gloria becoming newly widowed. Something to the effect that 'if you don't hit that, you know I'm going to. Gloria is one fine lady.' A comment like that obviously did not sit well with Tac.

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Back at the Lively auditorium, the academic advisers were on the scene helping students register for the following term. Good thing for Cassie since she has a final to get ready for and while other students were helping themselves to the breakfast foods being offered by the advisement team. She had her head in the books reviewing her notes.

Luckily, there were only two classes being offered this semester for Cassie's program, Microbiology and Life Sciences and Anthropology. It was a nice change of pace as her previous semester was loaded with tough classes. Advanced Physics II, Bioethical Law and Biomedicine. Being taught very young to be studious helped her to easily manage a 4.4 GPA for that semester alone let alone her overall 4.3 GPA. She is enrolled in one of the newest degree programs in the nation, with one of the toughest curriculums. Multi-Disciplinary Biology (MDB).

This degree is 220 credit hours which ultimately gave her a Master of MDB and a Bachelor of Biology Studies. She sacrificed a lot to get into the program. Even time away from her father as she buried her nose in the books just to be accepted to the school much more, the MDB program. There were only 3 students accepted to the program, Cassie, Digo and Sandar. The Selection process into the program was rigorous. had to be in the top %10 of national SAT

scores just to be accepted to the college. Then you had to be in the top %5 of the brain pool once at the college to apply for the MDB program.

Cassie really looked up to her mother for her work in the area of Microbiology, which is one of the reasons she fought so hard to be accepted to New Haven College. A small college of highly talented young adults from all over the world, literally out in the middle of nowhere.

Even Gloria has to remind Cassie from time to time that there is more to life than studying which Cassie snarkily replies 'I can't tell from seeing you work, you workaholic.' As usual Lively Auditorium lived up to its name as the students were mingling, chatting, and enjoying their breakfast spread and coffee. Digo and Sandar walk up to Cassie as she is reading her lecture notes.

"I brought your cappuccino and blueberry pancakes. You're favorite." said Digo.

"And I brought myself." said Sandar as he laughed out loud.

"If it isn't my two favorite guys." replied Cassie.

Digo gives Cassie his own lecture as he hands Cassie her pancakes and coffee by stating, "Don't you know it's lazy river day like all reg days are? You really should learn to add unplugging to your 'to do list'."

"Hey! I do unplug. Just last night I actually went to sleep rather than falling asleep on my computer desk."

"Well, that's a start." says Digo.

"Not bad." says Sandar.

"Thanks for the pancakes, but mom made breakfast today. I'll take the cappuccino though."

"You mind?" says Sandar.

"No, help yourself."

"Sweet." he says with a grin. "Thanks."

"Wow. So your mom was feeling generous, eh? What's the occasion?" says Digo. Cassie was a little reluctant to say that her birthday was next week. What she really wanted to say was that my mom just feels sorry for me since my father died two days before my birthday which happens to be next week.

"Well, it's my birthday next week and she knows we have finals. So, she was just trying to be nice."

"Oh yeah. Happy birthday. I almost forgot." says Digo.

"Yeah happy bithday, Cass." says Sandar.

"Thank you and thank you." replies Cassie.

"So, do you have any big plans?" questions Digo. "We were thinking about going to watch this new Sci-fi movie next week. It looks pretty crazy. We also were thinking about getting something to eat afterward. Wanna come?"

"Um...I don't know. Usually my mom plans all kinds of stuff. I think she wants me to stop by our friend Bill's house so that he can show be how to work this new gadget he made for my birthday. Plus she's got her conference she wants me to go to which I'm still undecided about. It is the week before finals and I don't do well with distractions."

"I wouldn't worry so much." says Sandar. "You're practically an expert in our field already. You were bound to get valedictorian for our graduating class this summer. So, maybe hanging out with us next week and accompanying your mom to her conference might not be a bad idea. Call it a mini vacation. Besides, Digo has been asking you out--I mean has been wanting you to hang out with us for some time now."

"Stop that, man." says Digo as he nudges Sandar.

"What? It's the truth. It's obvious you dig her." says Sandar as Cassie tries to hide her red face behind her cappuccino.

"See. You made her blush. Not cool, man, not cool."

"Sorry." says Sandar.

"That's okay." says Cassie as she hurries behind her cappuccino off to the restroom. "Excuse me."

"Good job." says Digo. "Now she thinks I'm a creeper."

Being very close to Gloria. Cassie naturally whips out her cellphone and texts her mom.

'I think Digo just asked me out.' the text reads.

'What!? That's great!' Gloria replies a few seconds later. 'So, what did you say?'

'Well, I was a little bit embarrassed and told him I would think about it.' Cassie replies.

'I think you should go. Digo is a nice boy and you really need to live a little.'

As Cassie starts to reply, the Quincy ringtone sounds off which is her dad's favorite TV show. She remembers watching reruns with him when she was just a little girl.

"Hey, mom."

"Speaking of thinking about it. Have you given it anymore thought?" Gloria asks.

"What? Going to the conference?" asks Cassie.

"I think it will be good for you to get away. Think of it as a mini vacation."

"What is this? Are you all drinking the same water? Digo said the same thing just moments ago. Like they say, 'great minds think alike'."

"I couldn't agree with him more."

"I guess I'll go, Mom."

"Yay!" Gloria exclaimed. "I'm so happy. I'm sure you'll have a great time. Besides, you'll get to see a lot of old friends. They have all been asking about you and wondering how you have been doing."

"But I have to be back by Monday. I have a two o' clock class."

proof

"Don't worry your pretty little head, Cassandra. I'll make sure to tell Tac you can't be late and you know how he is about being on time."

"Yep." says Cassie. "And don't call me that. You know how I hate that name."

"Okay, Cassie. You've made my day, you know that? I hope you end up going out with your friend because you might actually enjoy it. Let me run, I love you, and I'll see you tonight."

"Okay then. Love you." says Cassie as the call ends. She walks down a long hallway back to the auditorium and tries to act unhinged as she sits back down.

"I didn't mean to upset you." says Sandar.

"You didn't." replies Cassie. "I was just talking to my mom about her conference. I decided to go."

"That's cool." says Sandar.

"Those of you that still haven't registered can do so at this point with your advisors or can use the school portal to register online." says Professor Holmes. "As you know, it is important that everyone registers on time so that you can transition into the new semester with ease, know what classes you will be taking, which professors you will be taking them with, and have your books ordered. So unless you all have any questions, please eat up as we discard anything that is left over. Those of you of you that are already registered are free to go. Enjoy your day. Don't forget to study as our final is next Friday. You all have a good day."

'Lazy river day's are the best', says Sandar.

'About this gadget, what can it do?' Digo asks

"I don't know yet, I think it projects pictures on a wall or something. That's one of the reason's I decided to go to this conference. I wanted to ask Bill about it." Cassie replies.

"It already sounds pretty cool. I hope it's the best birthday present a girl could ask for." says Digo.

"Yeah, what he said." says Sandar.

"Thanks. I'm sure it will be. Bill is probably the smartest person I know." says Cassie. "Alright let me run then." she continues as she starts packing her backpack with her study notes.

As Cassie walks into Lively she left thinking about the gadget that Bill made for her birthday. She could not wait to get back home to play with the device again.

ZAvivors: ArC

Chapter 2: Loose Lips

The snow was really pouring by the time Cassie started walking to the student drop off. She reaches for her phone and starts to call Tac and as she looks up he's already parked outside in his black and tinted suburban that he promised Cassie once she graduated from college. Upon seeing the SUV parked outside, she quickly ended the call and walked up to the rear door and sets her backpack in the back seat.

"Hey." she said.

"What's up?" He replied.

"How did you know what time I was done?" Cassie asked.

"Ah, the school website says that today is final registration. So I figured it would be a lazy river day." says Tac. 'It's got to be something in the air.' she thought for everyone to be repeating themselves. "You ready?" asks Tac as Cassie closes her door and buckles in.

"Ready steady." she says as her dad used to always say.

"Gee, I haven't heard that in a while." says Tac. Just then Tac almost brings himself to say that he misses Dr. Vimel as Cassie brings up what happened at Lively.

"You wouldn't believe what happened to day. I think Digo asked me out."

"Woah nice. It's about time the kid grew a pair."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Well, it's pretty obvious. He's like a lost puppy around you and you pay him no mind." That was probably the worst timing possible for Tac to say this as Cassie was taking a sip from her coffee. She felt so consumed with emotion that she coughed a little, blushed a little, and a little coffee spat on the dash in front of her. "See, I knew you knew." says Tac as he hands her he hands her a few tissues.

"Thanks." she says as she wipes the well maintained dash. "So how was your day?" she asked Tac.

"Pretty good. The news was packed with infinite sadness and the usual misery. However, I did hear on the radio a breakthrough in medicine. Apparently they grew back some veterans arm and he can literally use it again. Grab stuff and even have feelings." finished Tac.

"Wow, that's pretty amazing to get a second chance at life." said Cassie.

"That's what I said!" replies Tac. Moments later his GPS gave a weather alert stating that a freeze warning is in effect until 2:00 AM Friday morning. 'I better check the pipes insulation when we get back to the house.' Tac though to himself. About ten minutes went by and all you could hear was the windshield wipers and the wind gust blow against the vehicle.

When Cassie finally says, "About our conversation earlier. Do you mind continuing? Like I don't know how you being an orphan has to do with how you met my father."

"That's just it, Cass. It pretty much has everything to do with how I met your father. Dr. Vimel used to say 'there's no such thing as chance when understanding chaos'. I never really knew what he meant until years later when I started researching something called Chaos Theory. I can say that I will never forget my first time hearing it which brings me full circle to your question. The feeling of abandonment had such a grip on me and it didn't help that I was put in a bad home." Tac paused as he gave a blank glare into the road ahead.

"Well, if you don't want to talk about it, then that's okay. I don't mean you feel uncomfortable."

"It's not that." Tac says as he clears his throat. "This is so long ago that I guess I haven't given it much thought and gone through the motions. So yeah. One night after a bad breakup with my girlfriend I went to a friend's house and got into his parent's liquor cabinet. I was 17 years young. I drank so much that I don't really remember much of that night. I do remember seeing your father's face having blood dripping off his forehead as he pulled me from the wreckage."

"Oh wow." Cassie said. "I had no idea. I have never heard this story before."

"And it is for good reason." Tac said. "The next thing I remember is waking up to a corrections officer slamming his nightstick against the bars saying 'your bail has been posted'. I had such a massive headache and was so thirsty you wouldn't believe. So he leads me to a processing room where he hands me my wallet and house keys. Then takes me to this adjacent room that has a table and two chairs and says 'I need for you to wait here'. My head was spinning at this point still having nothing to drink or eat and I still felt drunk. It must have been at least an hour that I sat in that room. And as I hung over as I was, part of me could not help but wonder what happened."

"And then fear struck me as I remembered seeing that bloodied man's face. Part of me wished it was a dream as I vomited a little in my mouth. Finally, the door opens and the same man walks in with gauze taped on his forehead. And then my heart sank because something told me I was in big trouble."

"Hello, John." said the stranger. "Do you remember me?"

"Now I do." said the scared young man.

"Do you know why you're here?"

"Something tells me I was in an accident, but I don't know for sure."

"You're in a lot of trouble, John. You were speeding, ran a red light, and T-boned my car killing my driver."

"Oh my god!" says Cassie as she looks at Tac and sees tears falling down his face.

Tac continues by saying, "I was devastated, Cassie. I took another man's life and I could not take it back."

"Being that you are a minor, here is what I am willing to do for you. I have booked you a one way ticket to France leaving first thing tomorrow morning at 8:00 AM. You have to dedicate the next five years of your life to the foreign services and complete your service honorably. I will talk to the judge and explain my wishes and our agreement. If you choose not to get on that plane, then you are in the hands and mercy of our legal system. Lastly, if you complete your time honorably and you ever need a job, here is my card. Here is your ticket." said the stranger. The half cocked teenager slowly looks up bloodshot eyes a bit teary at this point as he grabs the items from this strange man.

"Geez, so what happened next?" said Cassie.

"He left." said Tac as he pulled up to the T intersection reaching his turn for the final stretch home. The trip was quiet again for several minutes. The wind blowing hard as ever and the snow pelting the windshield.

"Brrr!" says Cassie turning up the heat. "So, what did you do?"

"Well, I sat there in that room for another hour it seemed and I opened the envelope. The plane ticket was there just like he had said with six one hundred dollar bills brand new and crispy. On the back of his card that very phrase 'there's no such thing as chance when understanding chaos' was hand written. That night I stayed in a hotel room. I remembered eating Chinese buffet still a little woozy. There were a billion things that went through my head.

I had all this money and it felt like I just woke up to my worst nightmare. I didn't know what to think. I just wish I could go back to last week, last year, whenever. I really didn't want to go back to my foster house. I really hated it there. I thought that if I stayed that drunk would give me hell on top of the hell I would soon face. So, I called the front desk and asked for a 6:00 AM wake up call. The next morning, I got on that plane with just the clothes on my back and the envelope and business card your dad gave me."

'What a tough beginning into adulthood.' Cassie thought. "So, what about this foreign service?"

"Well, they train you, they feed you, they put a roof over your head, and even give you a new identity in exchange for your complete commitment to the foreign services. They operate covertly and you never hear about them in the news...ever."

"So, there like a military?" Cassie questioned.

"That's exactly what they are."

"But who owns them? Like what government?"

"They are not officially apart of any government."

"Hmm." Cassie replied. "So, how was it?"

"It was hard as hell. In time, it only got a little less harder. So I did my time and decided to stay a couple years and travel Europe. I learned cars and became a mechanic specializing in exotic sports cars."

"That's cool." Cassie says.

"I never threw away that strangers card and one day I decided to call."

"Hello, Sir. You knew me as John. I now go by Jean Rousseau after one of my favorite philosophers."

"Hello, Jean. Good to hear from you. I hear you graduated top of your class and served your time honorably. What are you doing these days?"

"I am a mechanic in a small town outside of Paris."

"That's good. Staying busy I hope."

"Yes, Sir. It can be." he replies.

"Have you given much thought about my offer?"

"What? Coming to work for you?"

"You wouldn't necessarily work for me. I know some people that are looking for someone of your talent and skillset."

'What exactly would he know about my talent or skillset?' pondered Jean.

"Jean, let me cut to the chase. Years ago while on my way to a closed session congressional hearing, a drunk teenager crashed into the vehicle I was in. We know what happened to the driver and the teenager was pulled out of his car that quickly caught on fire. Without hesitation, I, the passenger ultimately decided that teen's fate. Not once, but twice."

"Wait. What did my dad mean by that?"

"I don't know, Cassie, but it sure as hell annoyed me and I let him know by hanging up." Both of them laughing soon thereafter arrive at the Vimel residence.

"What an interesting story you have there, Tac. I would have never guessed. We'll have to continue this tomorrow if that's okay?"

"Sure. Not a problem."

"Thank you for the safe trip home." Cassie says while opening the backdoor and grabbing her bookbag.

"You're welcome. Call if you need anything." says Tac as he takes the driveway around the house and parks at his guest house located adjacent to the main house. Cassie opens the door and sees Luke sitting on all fours waiting for her. A very well trained dog eagerly waiting her next command.

She pats Luke on the head and says, "How was your day?" Luke then becomes animated, wagging his tail, giving an amicable response. "Glad to hear." Cassie's phone starts ringing and the caller ID says Bill, so she taps the speaker phone and says, "Hey, Bill!"

"Hey, Cassie. I hear you're coming to the conference. Is that so?"

"Yeah. I could of wanted to get away. This time of year is not really good for me and I'm interested in the gadget that you gave me knowing all the bells and whistles."

"I know it must be hard for you, Cassie. Those who knew and worked for your father had nothing but the best things to say about that man. And I for one, miss him very much. He ogt me started doing what I love to do best 27 years ago."

"Oh yeah, what's that?"

"To tinker of course. So yeah, I'm actually set to speak Monday morning. So if you want my presentation you'll learn quite a bit. And if you have any questions we can get together whenever you have time. You're mom tells me you stay busy and from the sounds of it your program is difficult. Luckily Gloria still lets me make my own schedule, so I'm kind of like my own boss."

"That sounds good, Bill. Thank you very much. So you're presentation will cover this gadget?"

"Yes, but it's a little bit more than that and due to it's sensitive nature, i.e. patenting, I can't discuss it over open channels."

"Oh wow. So this is a pretty big deal, huh? I figured it just projected pictures as a hologram or against the wall or something."

"You'll see."

"Awesome. Now you have me wondering."

"Okay, I've got to run. I'll see you Monday morning."

"Okay then. Thanks for calling."

"You're welcome and I hope you have a happy birthday. Feel free to tinker with that thing if you get a chance. Oh! One last thing, there are at least three ways to interact with it voice, gesture, and touch."

"Will do. Goodbye." She then puts her phone back into her pocket and runs up-stairs to her bedroom where the birthday present was waiting on her bed. She jumps on the bed and the gadget bounces in the air and falls onto the bed and breaks up into nine pieces. "Oh no. I had no idea this thing was that fragile." Already emotional, she breaks down and cries from the thought of not being able to see her father again. She wipes her tears and sniffles. "Geez, I'm such a crybaby. I think I'm just tired. I'll take a quick bath before mom gets home.

She walks into the bath and turns on the shower head. This time only using the 'H' knob. It didn't take very long for steam to completely take over her bathroom and spill into the hallway. She walks into the shower almost numb and recalls the last conversation she has with her father. She was 14 years old and scored a perfect score on her SAT's which literally allowed her to start college before her 15th birthday.

Her father Rosh told her, "No matter what you do, or what you become, you have my support." She was considering taking time off from school since she was naturally shy and did not want to be in a school with so many much older than her. She felt like she would be seen as a freak. Of course her parents told her that she was talented and should use those talents to find her place in the world and make the world a better place.

That year two days before her 15th birthday, her father's airplane mysteriously disappeared off of the Gulf Coast and was never heard from again. A six month investigation into the disappearance of the plane and nine passengers concluded no foul play and that all nine passengers died in the accident. Cassie relived this moment so vividly that she could not hear her mother Gloria come home, calling her name from downstairs. Gloria knocks on Cassie's bathroom door and she finally hears a faint echo as if in a parallel universe. She comes to and scream, "Yeah", as she cuts off the hot water.

"Is everything okay?"

"I'm fine, Mom. You worry too much."

"Are we still on for pizza?"

"Sure. I'll just reheat mine. I think I'm going to take a nap." she answers while opening the door and drying her hair with a towel.

"Oh my gosh, Cassandra!" Gloria says worried as the steam billows out. Cassie's face was blush red and so were the parts that were not covered by her body towel, mainly her arms and legs.

"Oh. I didn't realize how hot the temperature was." Gloria then grabs Cassie and gives her a big hug.

"You know, if you ever need to talk, I'm here for you. I love you very much." she finishes as she steps back and holds her daughter by both hands.

"I know. I love you too. Thanks, Mom." she says with a faint smile. "I'll see you in a little while." she says as she closes the bathroom door and walks through the other door into her bedroom and lays down in her bed. She wonders if her mom finally caught her being disturbed. She quickly thinks about her dad once again, the gadget she broke, and Digo, the boy she has been avoiding for three years going on four, as her eyes became heavy and fell asleep.

ZAvivors: ArC

Chapter 3: Black Suits

Having slept for nearly 12 hours, Cassie rolls herself awake and notices the time is 5:59 AM. Laying in bed, feeling less tired and emotional, she grabs her birthday present and attempts to put it back together. She quickly notices that some pieces attract and some pieces repel one another. The pieces that repel seem to repel from the inside out and the pieces attract, attract from the outside in. She put it together but now the gadget didn't look the same. She really was starting to get frustrated. She pressed the green fluorescent button that has some type of symbol she has never seen before and the device reassembled itself. This time into a ball. This puzzled her since the original form was not round at all.

She then remembered Bill remembering the three ways to interact with this device and simply said, "Dad". The three dimensional hologram showed up, displaying a 42 inch display of pictures and video albums dating back to 1955. Her eyes filled up with tears as she continued with 'Summer 1955' under video albums. Three videos were available. The first labeled 'Model Rocket', the second 'Science Experiment', and the last one 'Space Books'. She then once again speaks and says, "Model Rocket", and instantly the 42 inch holographic display turns into an air

TV of sorts, rich in color. Playing back the 34 second clip of what looked like the then ten year old Dr. Vimel putting together a model rocket.

"One day not only will rockets be reusable, but we will unlock the riches that plasma holds and use this technology to propel us to Mars and beyond." said the young boy. This warmed Cassie's heart and as the clip finished, she closed her eyes and a solitary tear fell down her face. Tap tap tap Cassie heard on her door.

"Come in." says Cassie.

"Good morning. Did you sleep well?" says Gloria.

"Yeah, I needed that. Thank you."

"I see you are getting acquainted with your birthday present. How do you like it so far?"

"I've never seen dad so young and he was already a nerd back then." They both quickly chuckle.

"Yeah. He was always the curious type. "He always would say,'Ask why and when you get the answer keep asking why'."

"Bill said that this thing can do a lot more than just project videos and pictures. I'm pretty excited to know its various uses."

"Good. I'm glad you like it. Breakfast is waiting downstairs. As usual, Tac made an eye popping meal."

"Yay! I'm starved. I think I'll play the piano for a few and meet you downstairs."

"Alright. Well, hurry up. You have to be gone by 7:30." says Gloria as she closes the door. Cassie then slides the curtains to the left side and ties them off and is able to see that the snow did not let up much. Another cold day in the middle of nowhere. She is able to play five different instruments, but gravitated to the piano since the age of three. She also composes her own music and shares it anonymously on her favorite website.

She begins to play an automatically tunes out the rest of the world. Her pain, fears, and melts into each note, like a candle onto itself, with her eyes closed as she sways gently from side to side. This time she improvises a dark melody consistent with her mood.

Cassie walks downstairs and sees Tac sitting in his usual chair sipping his coffee while looking at the news. "Good morning." she says.

"Good morning." he replies.

"Thank you for the breakfast."

"You're welcome. Home you enjoy." he continues. "Things are not lookin to good over seas. They've just discontinued all space cooperation between the major foreign governments and us."

"That doesn't sound good." Cassie says. "This is why I drown myself in my books because politics is just ridiculous."

"You know, if we're ever going to get off this rock, our leaders are going to have to get over it." Cassie not being much for politics, focuses on her omelet. This time her spread includes hash browns with grilled onions, sliced strawberries, and a glass of orange juice. Luke patiently waiting for scraps, he sits on all fours, motionless.

"Sorry, Boy. I was really hungry." Cassie says putting the empty plate in the dishwasher. "You're going to have to eat your food this time." She pours a bowl of gourmet dog food that lost Luke's approval since he walks away. "Hmph. Suit yourself." Looking at the clock, Tac notices it's 7:15 and turns off the television.

"Alright, I'll be outside. It's almost that time."

"Okay, see you in a bit. Mom!" she screams as she grabs her coat from the coat rack. "Mom, I'm off to school!"

"Just a second." she hears from her Mom's office. A couple minutes later Gloria steps out of her office with her briefcase and tablet computer. "I'm off as well shortly. Mr. Gabriel called me last night and wanted me to fly someone in for the conference. Father Frank will be accompanying me.

"That's a bit weird." Cassie says. "A little last minute too, don't you think?"

"Yeah, from all the years working with Mr. Gabriel, this is the first unpredictable thing he has done. He didn't say much, other than, 'I need you and Father Frank to fly over to Ella and escort our VIP to the conference'."

"VIP, huh? Okay, I guess." continued Cassie as she gives her mother a hug and kisses her goodbye. "Good luck with that." she says.

"Have a good day. I love you."

"You too!" Cassie replies as she closes the door. Within an hours time, there was a break in the

weather. The snow still falling, barely, and there was not that much wind. The road crews have done good work as the roads are clear and drivable. Today's drive was a lot more quiet as neither had much to say. "So, how is that you ended up working with my dad if you hung up on him?" Cassie finally breaks the silence.

"Well, I didn't ever really work with your dad, but that's another story. He called me back a few minutes later and said, 'That is no way to say thank you', and it stopped me dead in my tracks. I returned with, 'You're right. Sir, I am sorry'."

"As I was saying, I could fly you in and introduce you to one of my contacts." said Dr. Vimel.

"Doing what kind of work?"

"All I am able to say is that your work is tactical."

"Nice. So that's where you get the name." Cassie says.

"Yeah, little did I know what I was agreeing to. For the next six years of my life, I was in training or a classroom setting until I got my first gig." Tac says as he pulls up to Cassie's school.

"I would love to see the world." Cassie says as she grabs her school books. "I've never even been out of this small town. Consider yourself lucky."

"I have had the good fortune to see and do many things. So yes, I am lucky. Have a good day at school today."

"Thank you for the safe trip." Cassie says as usual. As Cassie walks into Lively Auditorium, she notices that more than half of her classmates are missing. She does a quick head count and says, "16 including the professor", to Sandar as she sits down between him and Digo.

"What about 16?" He replies.

"The body count, Genius." says Digo.

"Oh yeah. There's like nobody here. I found that to be strange too, Cassie. I'm with you." He takes his two fingers and points towards his eyes then towards Cassie's eyes.

"I'm glad someone's awake." Cassie jokes as she nudges Sandar.

"Har har." He says.

"Class, a quick announcement." says the professor. "I have received word via email that as many as 100 students called in sick today with flu-like symptoms. Which is highly abnormal for

this time of year, as you know. I have been advised to tell you to avoid physical interaction with other classmates and in fact, spread out every fourth chair."

"What the hell?" says Digo.

"Sounds pretty serious." says Sandar.

"Seems a bit paranoid if you ask me." Cassie chimed.

"Don't waste your time asking any questions because this is all that I know. All questions are to be channeled to our nurse's office extension 1134."

"Alrighty then." says Digo. "What's next? A big fat quarantine?"

"Geez, I hope not." Cassie punches Sandar.

"Ouch! What was that for?"

"Because of the company you keep." Cassie laughs. Other than the spooky news, the class went on as normal with the first half including a 45 minute review for the final with a 15 minute break. The class was barely back ten minutes for the start of the second half which usually lasts another hour and a half when the Dean of Professional Studies and Advanced Medicine was heard over the loud speaker asking the professors to perform a role call and not allow students to leave the rooms.

Minutes later, a group of armed uniform personnel walk into the auditorium followed by a team of dressed in biohazard outfits. Chatter quickly came over Lively as the students were startled. When one of the military personnel approached the professor and spoke to him very briefly then turned to the students and said, "May I have your attention, students of New Haven. Under National Directive H8N1 Influenza, we will be screening everyone in this auditorium. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated. Please be advised that under this directive, deadly force is authorized. Electronic communication is prohibited. Please bring your cellphones up front. They will be returned to you shortly. Please wait patiently as you are called up for screening."

"WTF." Sandar says quietly.

"Yeah." says Digo shrinking into his chair.

"Okay, now I'm worried." says Cassie.

"20 including the guy in charge." says Sandar.

"Same count I got." says Digo.

"Have any of you ever seen these uniforms or the black suits? I have seen biohazard suits in different colors, but black?"

"Nope." said both as they watched the group setup three small booths that resembled voting booths.

"Cellphones. Let's go!" A man yelled, presumably next in charge. Everyone sprung to their feet and shuffled to the front. They were met by someone in a white biosuit completely covered head to toe holding a bright blue bag labeled 'Mobile Lab L7'. Other than this lettering, the only distinct marking on this bag looked like a green branch in the middle. It was hard to make out the symbol from their vantage point.

"Wait a minute. Just who the hell are you people? What are your names? What part of the government are you from? Anything?" yelled Digo who was known for his inquisitive nature.

"Young man, I have already told you under the National Directive we have been given authority to carry out this protocol. I suggest that if you like your current life, that you cooperate with us." Said the man in charge in an agitated voice.

"Digo!" exclaimed Cassie grabbing his shirt while pulling him down.

"Yeah, can it." said Sandar.

"See that's the problem. Everyone has just given up their rights and does anything without questioning. Like sheep being led to the slaughter." Digo said annoyed.

"You can proselytize later. This is obviously pretty serious and my heart is racing right now." Cassie said getting out of her seat walking towards the single file line.

The armed men and the bioteam wasted no time setting up. Within a few minutes of the cellphone confiscation the first name was being called. "Adler, Stacy. Duncan, George. Jenkins, Samuel. Parvez, Jonata. Kirtek, Jovahnz." The first five called quickly rose to their feet and awaited instructions. The secondary man in charge continued and said, "Please walk slowly to the table prepared on your left and empty all contents from your pockets into one of our team members' tray. Place them on the table and wait for your name being called by one of the techs."

"Dude, this is one of the creepiest things I have ever seen. Like why are they even armed and standing next to the people in suits." said Sandar.

"Well, maybe they don't want people to panic and hurt anyone." said Cassie.

"Yeah, but we're college students. Who are we going to hurt? The most we'll hurt is your intellectual feelings."

"You obviously haven't seen how people act. Ever heard of the Internet?" Cassie said.

"Wow. Just wow." Digo said. "Like I've seen videos online about this kind of shit, but I always thought they were fake." he continues. "Like once I saw people in military uniforms repelling from a helicopter and somewhere on stage at what looked like a rock concert where people were dispersing and screaming. While someone was on the megaphone saying, 'Please remain calm for your safety', and then the video abruptly ends when someone in uniform walks up and snatches the camera."

"Dude, you never told me that story. That's crazy." said Sandar.

"Padu, Sandar. Cantelli, Digo." as the man continues.

"Shit that's us." Digo said springing out of his seat.

"Good luck." said Cassie.

"Yeah." Digo looks back with a worried face. The two friends walk down the steps from where they were sitting as an armed guard put his hand up just before they get to the table. The uniform had no visible markings other than a green branch just above the heart area with the same symbol on the bright blue biohazard bag. Digo tries to make out what the symbol as he walks up to the soldier. If I had to guess, it is either a tree branch, a candy cane, or some sort of spiral wannabe. Digo says to himself as he looks at the symbol on the military soldiers' chest.

While one of the soldier standing guard with his rifle in hand the other has a basket where the students are placing the contents of their pockets. Upon Sandar emptying out his pockets, he is asked to sit down at a table where three techs are seated. Sandar sees two empty seats and sits down in the middle.

"Um hello." says Sandar.

"Padu, Sandar." says the woman in the white biosuit.

"That's me." says Sandar trying not to let the woman notice that his anxiety is kicking in.

"I just have a few questions and then I will ask you to go to one of the three booths here." says the bio-lady as she points immediately to her left.

"Okay." he quickly replies.

"Have you or anyone you know, in town or otherwise, visited the Caribbean islands within the last ten years?"

"Cool, an easy one." said Sandar. "No, I am from India and my entire family moved here. I have been to Canada for a ski trip with my parents. Does that count?" says Sandar.

Without batting an eye and almost robotically, the woman says, "When was your last flu shot and when was the last time you were sick with the flu? Be specific." says the interviewer.

"Hmm...well, we usually try to get our flu shots as a family affair in December. I don't really remember the day, but if I had to guess, the first week of December? And the last time I was sick was two years ago. That sucked. I laid in bed for two days. The only thing I could do was drink soup, water, used the bathroom, and sleep. I have never felt so bad in my life. It felt like I was going to die." Sandar says as the woman gleens up and says, "The date sir."

"Sorry. Summer 1991. June I think."

"Are you sure?"

"Um, yeah. It was the month before my birthday because I did not think I would live to see it." Laughs Sandar nervously. The lady gives Sandar a gentle smile which finally puts him at ease.

"Last question. Do you drink tap water or bottled water?"

"Um...well, we have a filter at home. It's one of those purifying filters that attaches to the faucet. My dad bought it at the grocery store, but other than that I'm a soda man myself." Smiles Sandar this time showing his teeth.

Without giving into Sandar's conversation, the lady in the biosuit says, "Thank you for your responses and cooperation, Mr. Padu. Please go to booth number two", as she points to these make shift privacy booths that would remind you of a voting booth with a curtain.

"Hi there, member of what team?" Digo asks hoping to get the soldier to give up more information about what was taking place. He then empties his pockets into the tray being held by the soldier. Without saying a word, the soldier steps out of the way and Digo looks at the armed soldier and says, "Not much for conversation is he?" And again Digo is met with silence from the armed soldier standing guard. He slowly walks up to the table and sits at the first empty spot on the left and starts to feel uneasy as he doesn't know what will happen next.

"Cantelli, Digo?" asks the man in the biosuit. It took Digo a split second to register that the man was saying his last name first and first name last as he was taken aback by the echo of the man's voice inside the biosuit.

“Yes, sir.” he says.

The man continues, “I just have a few questions and then I will ask you to go to one of the three booths here.” says the man in the biosuit as he points immediately to his left.

“Sure.” says Digo. “But I’m a little nervous as you can imagine.”

Without a reply, the man begins with his line of questioning. “Have you or anyone you know, in town or otherwise, visited the Caribbean Islands within the last ten years?”

“Yeah, my uncle lives in the Cayman Islands, but I haven’t seen him since I was born. He is busy with his seafood restaurant from what my dad tells me. They don’t get along, so we do not visit. So no.” The man moves on to his next question.

“When was your last flu shot and when was the last time you were sick with the flu? Be specific.”

“Well, I used to get sick all the time when I was a little kid. The last time that I was sick that I can remember was on spring break and that was in the eighth grade. I got a stomach ache and had to see the school nurse. It must have been the crappy pizza.”

“Your age?” asked the man.

“Now or then?” replies Digo.

“Then.” says the man coldly.

“I was nine. I skipped a few grades.” smiled Digo.

“Good on you.” replied the man.”

“Oh, an aussie are you?” Digo says hoping to strike up a conversation with the man.

“Last question. Do you drink tap water or bottled water?”

“Tap water all the way.” says Digo. “In fact, we took a field trip in the eighth grade to the water process plant in my town come to think of it.”

The man points to the booths and says, “Please go to booth number one.”

“Alrighty then.” Digo says.

Cassie sits waiting patiently for her name to be called as she looks upon her friends being interrogated and one by one vanishing into make shift booths. I wish I could call my mom. She

said to herself. Wait 'til I tell Tac about this.

"Vimel, Cassandra." says the man in charge. Please gather your belongings and come see me. Just then Cassie's heart sank as she was already upset with the whole situation. She made her way down the steps and walked up to the man who took her cellphone out of a device that was making some type of weird noise prior to a hatch opening. "Here you are." says the man handing her the cellphone. "Please follow me." Walking her to the auditorium's entrance.

"Thank you." she says putting her phone away in her purse while clutching her books in her armpit. Still worried about what's soon to happen to her, she follows the man's instructions and walks behind him.

He then opens the door for her while remaining inside and says, "You are free to go."

Being in a bit of disbelief, the kind girl says, "Have a good day." Her parents taught her to always win people over with kindness.

"You too." says the man as he shuts the door.

ZAvivors: ArC

Chapter 4: Ominous Sign

She starts walking towards the student drop-off and notices that Tac is already waiting for her outside and doesn't bother calling him. She starts dialing her mom and gets her voicemail.

"Mom, the craziest day just happened at school. Call me back." she says as she hangs up and opens the back door of Tac's SUV and puts her books in the back seat.

"Rough day I take it?" says Tac.

"Madness more like it." she replies. "How did you know I would be getting out early?"

"Bill called me and told me you needed to be picked up. That you couldn't use the phone at the moment and to wait for you outside. That's all he said. So I said okay and here I am."

"Weird." Cassie said.

"So what happened?" Tac asked.

"So like 20 people showed up looking up army men all dressed in black. Some in white biosuits and there were three in all black biosuits which I found kind of odd, but the entire scene was odd. As if it wasn't scary enough like ten of them were armed and the man in charge said

something about a National Directive H8N1.”

“Hm...” says Tac. “I was reading about that last year. That in case of a flu pandemic this directive allows for the suspending of the constitution.

“Black suits you say?” Tac says as he pulls out of the school parking lot. “Can you describe them?” He continues.

“Yeah, they looked like army men in black biosuits. Digo thinks that they had a patch on their shoulder, but no other types of insignia or name tags. When I looked for the shoulder patch, I didn't see anything. It looked like the symbol on their shoulder was a part of the suit and it was weird because it kind of looked like it was moving or pulsating?”

[image: the patch (a circle with a small branch) and the black biosuits (one black bio suit among the white)]

“Oh boy.” Tac says under his breath.

“What? What is it?”

“Well, now it makes sense why Bill called me.”

“Well tell me what's going on. My friends are in there. Are they in danger?”

“I think they are going to be in good hands. You shouldn't worry. As for what's going on, I have no idea. That's above my pay grade. I have seen those black suits before which is what made me wince.” The AM radio is playing in the back lowly as a few minutes go by.

“Well? Are you going to tell me?”

“Whatever I tell you, you cannot repeat because it could put your life in danger. I think that we all did a good job of trying to let you live a normal life when you're life is everything but. Maybe this has something to do with why your mom finally invited you to go ARC this year. Maybe she felt it was time for you to know more.”

“More of what exactly?”

“The research and people your parents have been involved with.”

Cassie puts her left hand on her forehead and say, “Can this day get any better? Is this even happening? What in the world...” Tac sees that Cassie is noticeably upset, so he slowly pulls off to the side of the road while turning on his hazard lights on and putting the car in park. The snow pelting the windshield at the moment and the wipers perform their duty.

"I need you to relax and hear me out." Tac says as he holds and squeezes Cassie's hand. As if on cue Tac has a flashback of a conversation he had with Cassie's father. Doctor Vimel distinctly said, 'She's getting older and will start asking questions. Just be honest with her.'

"What is it, Tac?" Cassie asks as she gently pulls her hand away.

"You remember telling you how your father got in touch with me and how I met him in the worst of circumstances? When I finally agreed to move back to the states, I can never forget what he told me when I asked him what he did for a living. He simply stated, 'We keep the worlds safe from bad thoughts.' I literally laughed out loud. It sounded more like what you would hear on a greeting card and novel at best. Do you know how old I am, Cassie?"

"30 something, aren't you? Digo's older brother is 34 and you look about the same age."

"53."

"No way."

"53." He repeated as he stared down the long snowy road. The black strip of salted asphalt dividing the white out. "There are so many things that I have experienced that are hard to describe. For example, back over seas my unit was sent to the Congo some years before it became the Republic of Congo and I was bit by a poisonous spider which should have killed me. And all I got was the chills. The men in my squad called me a Lucky SOB while the local Congonese tracker was scared to talk to me. He called me Doyu which in his tribe's dialect means ghost."

"The black suits?" Cassie asks.

"I'm getting to that. One night Mr. Vimel called me to give me a heads up on a mission my team was being sent on. He told me that the mission was coming from the top and that my men were already waiting for me in Gaulsale which is a town just outside the city limits of what he called the "Hotspot". He said, 'The Hotspot you will be going to is a small town named Zeffe'. His call was quick and to the point. Before he hung up he said, 'Whatever you do, do not get out of your vehicle. This is no ordinary XOP'." Tac finally puts the car in drive, makes sure that the road is clear, and continues the trip back home.

"Wait. So, what is an XOP, who do you work for, who do my parents work for, and what's this all about?"

"An XOP is a high level extraction operation. I headed a small team and trained many others on extracting high level targets mostly within the government."

“So, are you like some sort of search and rescue?”

“Yeah, something like that I guess. Except in my line of work everyone and everything is potentially hostile. So, I finally get to Gaulsae and I find my team waiting in the diner off of County Route 44. A tiny place that you'd miss if you blinked.

“What's up, Tac?” my Comms guy, Al, asked.

“Everything is good.” I replied.

“We were told by Cross to wait for you and wait for a follow up.” Just then a waitress comes up having too much makeup on her face and by the looks of her she's been at this for a long time.

“What are you having, honey?” As she loudly smacks her bubble gum.

“I'll just have a coffee, Ma'am. Thank you.”

“Cream and sugar?” asked the woman whose name tag reads 'Chastiity'.

“Black please.” Tac replies.

“Same bill, honey?” She asks.

“That's fine.” She then rips the ticket off the pad and places it in front of Tac. Just then a boop boop sound can be heard on Tac's encrypted satellite cellphone. 0300 CH is all the message said. After a quick glance, the five second timer expired and the message is auto deleted.

“Good to go.” Tac says as Chastiity's bringing plates of pancakes, scrambled eggs, and grits.

“Aw man.” and the other grumblings could be heard from the six man team sitting back to back to two tables.

Tac gets up and says, “I'll take care of this. See yall in five.”

“Whatchu doin', honey? Ain'tcha(?) hungry?”

“Yeah, but duty calls.” Tac says as he gulps down his coffee and sets in down on the counter next to the register. “Good coffee. Thank you.”

“It's a fresh batch. That will be \$73.31, hon.”

“That's an expensive cup of coffee.” Tac jokes as he hands the waitress a hundred dollar bill and heads for the front door.

"Wait! Here's your change."

"All set, Ma'am. Thank you." He says to her without looking back. Tac gets in his car and sees his sniper, Bip, sitting in the front seat and Joe, the team cook, in the back seat.

He barely sits down to crank the engine when Bip goes, "What the hell, Tac?"

"I know." Tac replies while holding one finger up in the air as to say 'wait a sec'. Pressing in his ear piece he says, "Comms up, Al?"

"Good to go, Sir." Al replies.

"Toe check, go." said Tac.

"San Marcos, good to go." said the weapons specialist.

"Pietor, good to go." said the driver.

"Clear, Greenly." said the team medic.

"Alright, team. We have an ETA of 0300. All ducks in a row. No wandering."

Doctor Vime's strict order to stay in the car at all times had Tac thinking. How can we extract our target if we can't get out of our vehicle? What if something goes wrong? What the hell?

After what seemed like hours of nothing but treelines hugging a road, exactly 40 minutes later they arrived at the scene that haunts Tac til this day. This was no ordinary town. It was industrialized and had all the common place technology as any modern city can expect. What isn't ordinary is it's location deep outside of prying eyes, not located on any map, the town known locally as Zeffe. A provincial state of its own micromanaging what would one day become the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Driving by the airport you could see the lights out, at least one airplane had skidded off the runway with its lights still on blinking, cars were left on the side of the roads with people missing others still on the side of the road with their doors open and hazard lights on. Finally, a sign of life can be seen. As we enter the city limits, we can see someone slowly walking in the opposite direction. Their skin was pasty pale and their eyes were wide open.

It was at this point that Tac closed his eyes and exhaled. Cassie quickly said, "What's wrong?"

After a moment Tac responds, "You only see that look on the battlefield." Tac continues, "So, we get to this four-way intersection and the traffic lights are alternating blinking yellow and red. Everything is dark. At 2 o'clock, there was a restaurant and it looked like it was on fire and

smoking. There was a person laying on the ground with their feet barely visible as it looks like they were run over by a car and no driver.

[image: what did the town look like?, image of restaurant burning,]

We took a side road and people's doors and windows were open. The entire city was dark. We drove past this woman that had a large knife in her hands as she was kneeled down stabbing the grass. As we got closer she turned and looked at us and you clearly can see lacerations on her face with her eye hanging out.

Bip shouted from the back, "Why the fuck would she do that?" It was becoming more and more clear to all of us why we were ordered to stay within the car at all times. When we finally get to city hall and the black biosuits are there including Cross and Mr. Gabriel. Your mom walked up to the driver window in her white biosuit and asked, "What are you doing here?" I simply told her that Dr. Vimel called us in. She gave a slight smile, "Figures. He worries too much. We are good to go. You can go home. Sorry for the trouble."

"Are you sure ma'am?"

"Yes, we are all set. Thank you." She then leaned in and said goodnight to the team.

A chorus of 'Goodnight, Mrs. Gloria' and 'Night, ma'am' comes from the other team members.

And come to think of it. Cross nor Mr. Gabby were in a suit at all. They were wearing normal attire with some type of long-sleeved, black undershirt. It is at this point that Tac sees the look on Cassandra's face of disbelief. He starts the car up and begins to drive home.

Just then Cassie's phone goes off to her favorite K-pop anime song. A quick exchange takes place. "Hi, Mom."

"Are you okay." Gloria asks.

"I'm fine."

"Look, I can't talk now I'm actually in the middle of a meeting. I'll talk to you in a few. Love you." and then she hangs up. 'She must be busy. I didn't even get a chance to say I love you back.' Cassie thinks as she texts her mother 'You too' and clicks send.

"That was my mom. She was just seeing if I was okay."

Coming from the radio, "Medical authorities will issue a statement about the mysterious flu that seems to give ominous behavior such as delusion, aggression, uncontrollable motor ticks and erratic speech. Dubbing it the Paddleburg Flu or the P-Flu for short, they simply want to calm

the poopublic from Internet rumors of a pending Zombie Apocalypse."

"Hmm." Said Tac.

"That's crazy." Said Cassie.

In other news continued the radio: "Yet an unknown amount of dead and maybe more missing from the massive earthquake that hit Jerusalem this morning. Destroying most of the Temple Mount and the Al Asqa Mosque also known as Dome of the Rock Mosque."

Not good, Tac said.

Why asked Cassie?

Well, aside from all the people that are dead, hurt, or missing?

This site is holy to the Abrahamic or Adamic traditions. They have literally been fighting over it for 1 thousand years if not longer. On top of all this, anyone that has studied the bible knows that a third temple would be rebuilt and then the end would come.

What end? Cassie asks.

You know, end of the world as we know it, replied Tac.

You don't really believe all that do you? Cassie asked grimacing.

Nah, but you have to remember that I was indoctrinated with this bullshit from the orphanage. Tac replies.

Well what do you think will happen? Asked Cassie.

The world won't end that's for sure. Maybe the end of violence, corruption, and greed. Then again, I have seen and done so much in my time on this Earth that it will have to be some hell of a trip for mankind to wake from their slumber.

Well said, she replies.

Anyway, Tac says as his A.M. radio station switches over to light jazz music in the background.

Just like that the snow lets up and the sun is visible once again in the sky. In the quietness of the moment Tac was hoping to end the conversation and just get home and find out more about the great Jerusalem earthquake. Deep down he is rather superstitious although he would never admit it. Too much has happened to Tac for him to not tap into the mystical aspect of life. Although his aptitude for science, literature, and mathematics makes him refute the

metaphysical he still has many unanswered questions that just can't be found in a book. Part of him wants to believe that we are all free to live out our days however we wish. Another part of him knows this is not the case. That there are some of us born to ensure harmony and balance is maintained in life. That justice and equity for all, is but a cornerstone in a universal building for everyone to live in and share. This is what motivates Tac, not that he is a good man. In fact he wrestles with his deeds a highly trained, highly intelligent predator, or as he says "In this life its, kill again or be killed." Words taken to heart by a young 18 year old Legion recruit.

"Alright we're here," Tac says pulling up to their driveway.

"Try not to worry too much kiddo," he says to Cassie.

You're friends will be just fine, he continues knowing it was heavy on her mind.

The SUV rolls to a stop and they both exit the vehicle. Cassie grabs her books and heads for the front door. As Tac does his usual security walk around the property to ensure nothing new is in place or something old out of sorts, you hear a faint

"Thank you." Tac

Sure, for what? He replies.

For being there for us. She says.

The normally nonchalant Tac gets taken aback from her unexpected gratitude. His eyes gloss over as he says,

"You are welcome Cassandra."

Cassie opens the door to see the well trained Luke sitting on all-fours motionless.

She closes the door, puts down her book bag, and hangs her coat on the rack.

"Okay Luke, come tell me about your day." she says.

[Image: of Luke on all fours with head slanted]

The dog obviously happy to see his bestie twirls a couple of times gesturing he missed her and puts his head on her arms as she crouches down to hug him. He quickly breaks character and barks as he runs into her room, then runs back out into the hallway as to signal her to follow him.

"What is it, boy?" She says as she follows him up to her room. As she walks into the room of her already open door, she hears a very quick whizzing sound and sees what appeared to be

different color orbs glowing above the object she received as a birthday present. Everything happened so quickly, it's as almost as if just as quick as she saw it the orbs disappeared and the whizzing noise stopped within a blink of an eye. Luke sat on all fours calmly looking at his best friend as if to say 'see, I told you so'. Cassie looks back at Luke and says, "I saw it too."

[image: the orbs swirling in the air and luke reacting to them]

She then walks up to object and grabs it. She feels a weird sense of energy coming from it and could swear that some parts of the object are now shiny yet see through. As quick as these sensations came, they too vanished. She hears a text message from her cellphone and while still holding the object in her hand checks her cellphone and sees a message from Digo saying 'Hey, just seeing if we're still up for studying tonight. Sandar can't make it. He has to work at his parent's restaurant. Just let me know and I will explain when I see you.' finished Digo.

Cassie happy to hear that her friends were okay starts to eagerly reply as her cellphone cuts off abruptly. She sets down her birthday present on the nightstand and the lamp starts to flicker on and off and then stays dim. Her phone turns back on with some random patterns she has never seen before, cuts back off, says charging, and within a second later completes starting and says charged. "What in the world?" says Cassie. The phone boots back to the original screen where she was replying to Digo's text message and she sees in the reply the phrase 'yes, stop by whenever...' that she doesn't recall ever typing only thinking. "Wow." she says as she clicks send. The phone then rings with an incoming message from Gloria. She answers by putting it on speaker.

"Hi, Mom."

"Hi, Cass, can't talk long. Just wanted to know what you wanted for dinner and if your friends were coming over to study, so I would bring extra."

"Just one." Cassie replied. "Sandar is helping his parents at the restaurant tonight. I'm feeling some Parmesan chicken with an extra order of those yummy breadsticks. Digo pretty much eats anything you put in front of him. Oh and two sweet teas please. Thank you, Mom."

"No worries, Hun. Gotta go. I love you."

"I love you too, Mom." Cassie replies as she hears the dial tone. She then feels a bit sleepy from her sleepless hours of studying and lays down to take a nap. What felt like 15 minutes turned out to be two hours and 20 minutes as she hears the front doorbell. Luke being the good guard dog that he is begins to bark and upon hearing Digo's voice he calms down and begins wagging his tail.

"It's me, Luke, calm down." Digo says behind the door.

“One second.” Cassie yells as she is trying to quickly get ready in front of the mirror. She touches up her smeared mascara, wipes her face, and heads to the door. She opens the door and says, “Hey, sorry about that. I was taking a nap.”

“Oh that’s okay. Was it delicious?” he laughs.

“I don’t know. It felt like I literally just layed down, but then I don’t feel tired anymore. This entire days has been weird.”

“You could say that again.” Digo says as he pulls out his tablet. He follows her into the kitchen as she gets grapejuice out of the refrigerator.

“Are you thirsty?” she asks him.

“Sure.” he replies as he types away on his tablet.

“So what happened today?”

“Oh. Well, that’s what I am trying to show you.” as he plays a video and puts the tablet on the kitchen counter. The video shows someone recording what appears to be a music festival as helicopters are hovering by. You can distinctly hear a loud speaker say over the music, “Everyone remain calm and make your way towards the entrance for processing.” Next, you can see several people repelling from helicopters in what appeared to be in all black military gear. You see in the short 20 second clip people in what appears to be black biosuit with the similar insignia of what they had witnessed earlier in Lively Auditorium. The video then stops. “It took me some digging, but I knew that I have seen that before.” says Digo as Tac walks in from his perimeter check.

“Seen what before?” Tac asks.

“The black biosuits.” he says as he replays the video. “The site where I got this from says that this is a possible bubonic plague outbreak and I thought that the bubonic plague had been eradicated. Evidently, there have been a couple of infections in the mountain regions of the west. They call it Jever instead of fever I don’t know why. Something tells me it was the name of the actual town but I can not find that name anywhere in maps, concluded Digo.

“Hmm.” says Tac as he finishes watching the video. “The Department of Wildlife and Forestry has come across the bubonic plague in the last 20 years from capture samples. The article I read says that upon testing positive for any type of bacteria or virus the animal is euthanized and a brain sample is sent to the Department of Diseases.”

“Yeah, but what about the video?” asks Digo.

“What about it?” Tac replies. “It could be that the party got out of control. A bunch of young kids having an unsanctioned party in the middle of the woods.”

“Yeah, but military and the same black suits that showed up today?” Digo replies.

Tac and Cassie make eye contact as Tac says, “I wouldn’t worry about it too much. The world is not a perfect place, but there are people doing what they can to perfect it.” Tac then pours a cup of his brewed coffee from his programmable coffee pot. Like clockwork, he sits down at the kitchen table and turns on the evening news.

“This is Hailey Bailey coming to you from the epicenter of the quake where an unknown injured and dead are buried beneath the rubble.” Wailing and crying can be heard in the background as people are ducking and running while covering their faces with bloody and dirty shirts. “We have to warn you that the following images can be disturbing.” continues the reporter as they walk through the city streets and people lay dead. “Jerusalem will never be the same again. The damage to the Dome of the Rock Mosque better known as Al Asqa Mosque is said to be total as even the foundation where the original temples lie became fractured by the tremendous quake being estimated as a 7.9 to 8.1 on the Richter scale. The gate facing the cemetery where Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike are now buried is also cracked. Some are calling this the return of the Messiah as it was written across multiple holy books. One thing is for sure, Jerusalem will never be the same again. This is Hailey Bailey live from Jerusalem signing off.”

“Wow.” Digo says. “At least they won’t have to fight about ownership and who gets to pray there anymore.” Tac looks out the kitchen window across the frozen lake.

“Are you ready?” Cassie asks.

Digo says, “Oh yeah. Ready steady”, as he usually says. “Later, Tac.” he says as he walks behind Cassie towards her room. Tac nods his head and raises his cup of coffee as a gesture of good will. Luke lays down next to Tac as if to never forget his original best friend. Tac’s vast experience of training suited Luke well as they were together for Luke’s first year prior to giving him away to Cassie as a birthday present.

Digo closes the door as Cassie says, “So what happened today?”

“Nothing, it was just kind of trippy. The nurses were really nice. They just took a cheek swab and said that they would send it to the lab. They also said that if we did not hear back from them, it was a good sign. What happened to you?” Digo inquires. “Where did you go?”

“Oh.” Cassie quickly remembering her conversation with Tac on the return trip home wittingly said, “I was excused because of known allergies.”

Not thinking twice of what his friend said, Digo’s ADHD kicked in and says, “You know it took

three hours to get my phone back? We sat in the auditorium, finished registering for classes, and Sandar and I just stared at each other while the New World Order finished processing and scaring the hell out of our classmates. You know you still have til Friday to register, right?"

"Oh, I already registered." says Cassie. "My advisor sends my academic roadmap and I just pretty much say sure and she takes care of the rest. As long as I don't fail a class, I practically know which class I will take from now til graduation."

"You fail a class? LOL." exclaimed Digo. "When pigs fly."

"Hey! Stranger things have happened." says Cassie thinking back on the colorful orbs and the whizzing sound coming from her birthday present. A soft knock knock is heard from her door. "Come in!" Cassie says.

"Sorry I'm late, Dear." says Gloria while handing Cassie a coaster with two large ice teas. "It was a long line."

"Ah, no worries, Dr. Vimel. Thank you for dinner as always."

"You're welcome, Digo. How are your parents?" she says as she hands him the plastic bag filled with food.

"Well, my moms always working since she has to pick up the slack now that my dad is out of work for his back surgery. She just wants me to focus on getting good grades."

"Well, that's nice of her."

"You know that his job I denying his worker's compensation and are calling it a pre-existing condition. Like he got this condition before he ever started working there. So he is having to appeal his insurance decision."

"Oh, I am sorry to hear that. Well, tell Beto and Iris that if they need anything to call me."

"Gee, thank you, Dr. Vimel!" says Digo with tears in his eyes. Being close to his father, it hurts Digo to see him suffer and be in excruciating pain and not to mention the medical expenses.

"Okay, Mom." Cassie looks at her says, "Thank you", as she looks at the bedroom door.

"Oh! You're welcome." she says as she walks off and closes the door.

"Dr. Vimel is really nice. You're really lucky to have her as a mother."

"Yeah, I am." Cassie says.

“You know I was thinking, Cass. Why don’t we watch a movie tonight instead of studying?”

“Um, what movie?”

“I don’t know. I found a site online that has a bunch of screener movies currently in the theater.”

“Sure. I haven’t seen a good flick in a while. You pick”, she says, “since it was your idea.

“Okay. You got me there.”

“Just so you know, this isn’t a date.” Cassie said. “We’re just enjoying dinner and a movie together as friends.”

“Totally.” Digo replies as he stuffs his face with breadsticks while trying to hide the fact that he is blushing. “These breadsticks are divine.” he continues. “So did you finally decide to go to the conference with your mom this year?”

“Yeah, I think that I am going to go and show her some support. Besides, there are a lot of family friends there that I haven’t seen for some time.”

“That’s good. Well, maybe when you get back the following weekend we can all go to the skating rink?” Digo asks.

“Maybe.” Cassie replies.

“Maybe is good.” Digo says with a mouth full of Alfredo chicken and sauce running down his cheek. “You know my people created chick alfredo, right?”

“I thought pasta was created by the Chinese four thousand years ago?” Cassie replies.

“You got me there.” says Digo as they both have a laugh. Being of Italian descent and being proud of his heritage, Digo never shied away from letting anyone know about his love of country.

Hours had passed and Digo gone home. Cassie puts on her nightgown and starts to brush her teeth. The light knock on her door comes as Cassie says, “Come in.”

“Hey, Kiddo.” says Gloria from the hallway. Luke wastes no time running into the bathroom and jumping onto Cassie’s bed. He too knows it is bedtime. “I just wanted to tell how happy I am that you will be coming to the conference. I am sure that everyone will be glad to see you. Some of them haven’t seen you since you were nine years old.

"No problem, Mom. I'm sure it will be a lot of fun. I am pretty excited myself. Passionate people sharing their passion with other passionate people, what's not to like?"

"Exactly." Gloria says as she kisses her daughter on the cheek and says, Be ready by noon. Goodnight. I love you, says says as she closes the door."

"Okay, good night, Mom, love you."

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Chapter 5: Ring Ring

Gloria did not get to sleep till late, the night before. It was well after 10 pm before she even started to wind down. It must have had something to do with Mr. Gabriel's 'out of the blue' phone call concerning a guest keynote speaker.

"Who the hell is this guy, that he is so important to be thrown in at the last minute by none other than Mr. Gabriel?"

The phone call was brief. Just after 8 pm, her phone rings.

"Dr. Vimel, this is Gabriel. I have a favor to ask of you."

"Oh hi, Mr. Gabriel. Anything. How may I help you, this evening?"

"Well, you see. I would like for you to pick up a young man by the name of Jasper Kelvin. He is a local and lives 10 miles from the convention center. I will have Father Frank accompany you, as that area is not the best. I told him you will be there to pick him up at 7 am sharp and that you will be providing breakfast. Please book him a room and provide him a badge for full access to the conference for the duration. If he needs any accommodations or creates a tab of any amount, Father Frank will see to such expenses. He has a unique perspective on life, which is the purpose of my invitation. Lastly, and most important I need you to squeeze him in as our first speaker for day 1 of our conference. Please introduce him as The Gaiaologist and Keynote for our conference, he will explain the rest."

Of course Gloria's first reaction was to agree to Mr. Gabriel's bidding as he the boss. She was taken aback a bit as she could not help but wonder what this was all about. She was to be the keynote of the week long conference, as she has done so for the last decade. She is the project chair after all and had her speech all written out 1 month ago. She was a bit in disbelief as Mr. Gabriel had never been much of a talker, nor been one for abruptness.

"Sure Mr. Gabriel. Where do I pick up this young man?" Gloria replied.

"Father Frank will meet you in the Hotel Red Oak lobby at 6:30 am." Please see him for details.

"Oh okay." She said.

Still dismayed, Gloria grabbed the courage to ask Mr. Gabriel about the sudden changes.

"Mr. Gabriel, if you do not mind..."

Before she could finish her question.

Gabriel says, "Thank you."

Next thing Gloria hears is the dial tone. Alright then. Gloria thinks to herself.

"Now I have to change the itinerary to include a new keynote!" This guy better have found the Holy Grail. She continues thinking.

Gloria puts on her slippers as she tightens her robe and walks across the hall, then taps on Cassandra's door.

Come in, Cassie says.

"Hi dear, Mr. Gabriel just called in a favor so I need to meet Father Frank in the morning. Can you heat up some left overs or ask Tac to cook you something in the AM?" Gloria asks apologetically.

Cassie looks up from reading a novel she's been excited about "Monsters Among Us." Sure mom, I still have that Clam Chowder Tac made for lunch. I'll eat that. Cassie said.

Thanks dear, I love you. Gloria replies as she waits for Cassie to say it back.

"I love you too mom." Cassie says as Gloria closes the door.

The next morning came quickly. The lifetime insomniac only needs 3-4 hours of shuteye to recharge her batteries. Gloria gets up with a big yawn, grabs her spectacles from the night stand and turns on the lamp. She then proceeds to wash her face in the bathroom and notices her ever aging face. A slight worry came upon her as she considers Cassandra's future without her mother. Gloria tries her best to fill both shoes but it has taken a toll on her. She tries to not let Cassie see how hard it has been since her husband's passing to be both a mother and father to their only child. After taking a deep breath for strength she takes a quick 10 minute shower and notices the time on her small citizens watch given to her by her late husband.

"Hmm. 5:10 AM" she says to herself as she hates to be late.

She quickly brushes her hair, buttons her blouse, and opens Cassie's door.

Blowing a kiss she says "Come Luke." Luke, jumps down from the bed and scurries into the kitchen where Tac was pouring a second cup of coffee.

Good Morning Tac, Gloria says.

Good Morning Dr. Vimel, he replies turning on the TV tube.

Still fixated on the Jerusalem quake, Tac tries to find breaking coverage on the news.

I poured you a cup of coffee, Tac says as the reporter gives the horrible news update.

This is Hailey Bailey live from the Jerusalem quake where thousands are said to be missing and that many feared dead. Soldiers from Countries United, from all over the world are here and have pledged not to leave until order is restored. The fear is that terrorist organizations can use this tragedy to stage an attack at an already beleaguered place. Day three, and the mourning continues, this has been Hailey Bailey with 101 News live from the Jerusalem quake.

Wow. Gloria says as she sips on her coffee.

I know right, what a mess. Tac replies.

You know Rosh said it would happen, just like that too. Gloria says.

He had a knack for predicting, when he did predict. Oddly, he hardly ever did.

When he first mentioned things, back when we were high school sweethearts. I did not pay him any mind. I mostly thought he was just lucky I guess, she says as she lets Luke outside to use the bathroom.

Just curious what did he say the Jerusalem quake? Tac inquires.

Well that 8 thousand people would die in a major earthquake that would destroy the temple on it. And that this would start a bad war since one side would say it was an act of GOD while the other would blame them for using technology causing it to collapse. He also said that they would rebuild the temple to make everyone happy and call it Universal House of Prayer and Worship or something, I forget. He was really into prophecy and stuff, I sometimes would laugh at him and tell him he should have been a preacher. Gloria finished.

I had no idea Doctor Vimel was into that kind of stuff, Tac said.

Yeah, he was really private about those things since he did not want his scientific background to

be questioned. Besides, how could he explain seeing future events?

Good point, Tac replies.

Did he say what happens afterward? Tac asks.

The final war over good and evil, Gloried replied. The war that was fought over our minds and that most would go crazy with sensory overload as he called it. Basically, there would be a new reality that would take place where people would not know how to cope. He really worried about us, even you. So he work tirelessly on Plan 2 with you over the years. He said that you would know when it was time to initiate it and that he trusted you with our lives.

Just then Gloria could see Tac bow his head and close his eyes. She sees Tac take a deep breath as tears fall down his face. A mostly cool and collected super soldier then says as he wipes his tears.

"You bet you can count on me. You, Cassie, Luke and this here cup of coffee are all I got. I became a man I am proud of because of the Vimels. I can not thank you enough he concludes as he takes another sip of his coffee.

Gloria grabs a paper towel and for the first time gives Tac a kiss on the head just like any good mother would.

Then says "We are lucky to have you too. I remember the morning Rosh told me about the accident. He was really upset that Jaer died. He was not only his driver but they were close friends since childhood. He said he wanted to strangle you with his bare hands for taking away a good man from this Earth so needlessly. I think it was his faith that helped him pass this tough time. He was deeply spiritual but not religious. He said "God gives and takes away, there is always a purpose. Years later that purpose is you.

The grown man now sobbing, says "He never told me."

Standing over Tac, she continues as she rubs his back gently "You had the odds stacked against you and the world surely would have counted you out were it not for that fateful night. So you see, one life was lost while another one is gained.

Tac then sees a glimpse of the little he can remember from that night. Quick flashes of bits of memories such as speeding up to beat the yellow light, while sipping on the empty bottle of cooking wine. They turned in front of me! He thought, as his car rams the car crossing his path. The no seat wearing teenager then gets violently thrown out of his car and lands 9 feet away. The joyride over and the car now smoking.

Minutes pass as he remembers hearing the voice of a man asking "Are you okay son?" The kid

laying in his own vomit and blood then gets rolled over and put on his back. Rosh takes off his coat quickly folds it and puts it under the teenager's head tilting his head to the side towards the accident scene. The youth now coughing up blood, starts to vomit so more and quietly grumbles as his breath starts to make a weezing. "Owww, Owww." As he chokes more on a mixture of stupidity, immaturity, and path finding fun. He did not know it at the time but he was dying, the accident had broken two ribs one of which punctured his lung, he also had a broken wrist that usually gets tender when bad weather comes around.

He barely sees Rosh standing over him on his cell phone calling for emergency services before his passes out.

Wow. "I would have let me die." Tac said teary eyed.

Rosh thought that we are all worth saving, we just have to choose wisely. And you did, Gloria finished. You became one of the company's best recruits behind Captain Cross as Mr. Gabriel would say. Rosh said you were his favorite because as he would put it "That Cross has a stick up his ass."

Finally the mood broke into new light as they both had a laugh. Gloria takes a moment to ask "Say, are you busy? Would you mind dropping me off at the Red Oak lobby? Mr. Gabriel gave me a last minute change and I am to meet with Father Frank for our new conference keynote."

Sure, "When do you need to be there?" Tac asks as he looks at his watch and sees 0555 AM in military time.

I am supposed to be there at 6:30 this morning. Gloria replies.

"Oh, in that case I will meet you outside." Tac says as he gets up and fills another coffee cup.

"Thank you Tac." Gloria replies while grabbing her coat off the coat rack and opening the front door. The patient pooch waiting on all fours gives Gloria an "About time!" look as he walks in and veers right towards Cassie's room only to sit patiently in front of her door. Gloria walks up behind him and opens the door. Luke jumps back onto the bed and coils at the end of his master's feet.

"What time is it Mom," a voice can be heard.

Almost six AM dear. Tac is taking me to Red Oaks to meet Father Frank. Gloria says.

"Okay. I love you mom." The raspy voice says.

"I love you too Cassandra." Gloria says as she closes the door.

Gloria exits the mansion and the automatic deadbolt security doors lock behind her. She can be seen walking down the steps heading towards the bullet proof SUV from various angles of her high tech video surveillance system strategically placed around the perimeter of the property by none other than the groomed and life long tactition. Tac waited patiently for Gloria, he would wait hours and days if need be, his life of service to XOP GO or Global Observations as correctly named did not bring him the gratification he sensed service the Vimel family. This was Tac's way of making it right. In his mind his real parents wherever they were would have stood by his side and fought right along side him. The fact that they did not had always left an empty void in Tac that was only filled by working with the Vimel's.

Gloria walks toward the well armored and maintained vehicle. She notices twilight still present and casting a blue-purple hue across the sky. A strong easterly wind blowing almost blew her into the car as she opens the door to sit down.

=====Picture of Twilight skies=====

"At least it's not snowing." She says as she slams the door.

"Ready steady?" Tac replies with a smile.

"Sure." Gloria says as she looks at her watch. 6:06 AM it reads.

Gloria then receives a text message from Father Frank that reads spa.

"Can this get any weirder", she thought to herself.

Father Frank just text me "spa." Gloria says to Tac as she pulls down the passenger-side mirror. SPA stands for Security Protocol Activated, which meant highest level of security with only briefed personnel meant to have eyes and ears on the matter.

"Why initiate SPA over a key-note speaker?" Tac asked Gloria puzzled.

Not sure, this entire thing is bizarre in the 40 years I have known Mr. Gabriel he has never pulled anything like this. One thing you can count on him is to be consistent. Gloria replies. You want me to tail you when you go Father Frank to meet this mysterious key-note? Tac asked.

"No I am sure it will be okay." Gloria says closing the mirror.

Tac wasted no time to message Captain Cross the four character message "SPA"

He carefully looks left, right and left again to make the quick trip Red Oaks hotel, literally the only hotel in a 45 minute radius. A nice hideaway for seasonal skiers Red Oaks stays booked year round and is almost impossible to book a reservation without being in the know. Minutes had passed, only whizzing could be heard from the barely cracked window from Tac's drive side door. A beep beep sound could be heard coming from Tac's phone.

"On it." says the reply text message from Captain Cross.

Tac soon feels a bit more light-hearted knowing that the decorated soldier was pulling security detail for Dr. Vimel. He would have been more at ease had he been involved in providing security for this event. What puzzled him was the fact that last minute changes are not something that usually comes from Mr. Gabriel.

// silence for the car ride to Red Oaks, discuss the weather and no news on radio
you are not where you may want to be but you are not who you used to be. Its best you turn the page. Gloria says as she closes the car door.

For the next several minutes the motion

ZAvivors: ArC

Chapter 6: Day 1 of the Astrobiological Research Conference

So uh, um hi. My name is Jasper Kelvin, and I am not sure I am supposed to be here, like after speaking with some of you in the lobby you all are doctors and experts and shit. Some of which I have never heard of so I am a bit out of my comfort zone. Excuse me if I say something wrong or use a bit of profanity but goddamn wow! Anyway, Gabi assures me that I am supposed to be here so I will just go with that and start from the beginning.

Like I ain't done a speech ever yo, I mean a zombie talk show that I thought no one listened to but I guess I was wrong. My friends jokingly call me a gynecologist a play on the term I gave myself "Gaialogist", the main reason I am here I am told.

"Okay focus Jazzer", he says to himself.

Oh yeah, you can call me Jazzer, a nickname given to me by my BFF Della. That is best friend for forever for those not hip in millennial lingo. A much welcomed chuckle is heard from the crowd allowing Jasper to take a sigh of relief.

So yeah, I come from a little known Indian tribe called the Mamalu or Mamu although that is wrong translation. The original inhabitants of the Americas. We are said to be older than Atlanteans, yes they really existed and are sometimes confused with Lemuria. In short, our oral

traditions say we are the original black man of the black land, the Mu. I am obviously not black, but here is where our sacred teachings take us to the primal knowledge that is said to be the summary of all knowledge and wisdom. Wow, great grandmother Malulu told me I would be doing this since I was a child but I just thought she was going senile. She said I would talk to the elders again, when the time came to transition back to the primal knowledge. Holy shit! Jasper said out loud.

We are named after Mamalu, the original creator of ALL. ALL is said to be the body that creation and existence resides, thus the name ALL. This body is said to be the original male counterpart to Mamalu, that she fertilized with her own eggs, also known as planets. The body is said to be in the amniotic sac or fluid called the Mu, another translation for the space that encompasses us and everything that exists for that matter.

“So far so good?” Jasper wittingly asks the crowd.

“Good!” Jasper smiles as he looks towards the back of the small room and notices Mr. Gabriel smiling back at him.

“Cool, I got a smile from Gabi so I think we’re good here,” hehe Jasper continues.

By the way, you all have a really cool boss, it felt like I knew him all of my life, its weird he doesn't look old but he sure has the spirit of a much older man. I pictured talking to my great grandfather Chief Black Paws, whom I never met since he died before I was born. Sorry I am going off on another tangent, I do this a lot so bear with me.

Also, our traditions were never written down and were maintained orally to avoid corruption. Seems weird that we do not have any records, pictures, cave art, or rituals to share other than the primal knowledge itself. My great Malulu or Lu as I used to call her, would say about the primal knowledge

“Let go of your deepest desires and fears. Consider that nature is chaos and it is your job to bring order, if you don't Mamalu will force order upon you convicting you with your pleasures and pain.”

The primal knowledge are sounds, thoughts, images, and colors that originate from the black land. But it is much more than this, yet simpler at the same time. I have studied lots of religions and cultures. Other teachings seem to complicate the vitals necessary to exist in perpetual balance with nature. Our core values for example say that as Mamalu gave us the right to exist, so we must also duplicate this same right for current and future generations. Think about it, we have a body, organs, made up of mostly water with an electric current, that is self sustaining. Seems pretty much a no-brainer, that we should give each other the same. The body is our mind's shelter, it already has its own water supply, electricity flowing through that allows us to communicate internally and externally. It would seem phenomenal to the outside world that an

indigenous tribe would have such beliefs, you would think that we have a history of cannibalism and violence.

We mostly focus on the vitals to life, providing these things for each other and the rest falls into place as we continue to learn and adapt to our environment. What am I saying in plain English, you ask? You all have it wrong, the world has it wrong. You are charging each other to exist when the fare has already been paid. Free food, water, communication, electricity, shelter, and a companion. This is our primal knowledge that our very bodies show us, that nature shows us. I am not sure I can say it more plainly than this, the point is the mind will then have everything necessary to thrive and not cannibalize itself. Which brings me to the next point, Malulu saying I would tell the elders of the time of the return of primal knowledge.

She would say that, "When men refuses to do better when they know better, Mamalu will lullaby. This would activate the primal mind and return it back to primal knowledge. The beast that did not play well with others will go rabid and feast on itself and others. The real feast awaits those in harmony with the Mu." Jasper finished.

"That is one hell of a lullaby" everyone laughed including Jasper.

"Okay, that's it. Any questions?" Jasper ends abruptly.

Dr. Vimel with a mic in her hand says "Please stand up one at a time, state your name field of study, and ask your question."

A man stands up from the front row and Gloria makes her way towards him.

"Dr. Victor Numann, Neural Photomitosis with the NuGen Lab, let me say that I have never heard of your tribe but I am very intrigued by the proposition of your lore. In my field, we are very much concentrated on the mind-brain connection, the various states of consciousness and how various stimuli affect our behavior. For my question, did I understand you correctly that Mamalu, I hope I said that correctly, punishes the world by making them go crazy?" Thank you for your response, Dr. Numann concluded.

"Thank you, Dr. Numann," Gloria said.

"Yes, in essence this is what happens. Although I think the reason for this is straight forward, basically the Earth goes through cycles and changes. Our role is to adapt and change through these cycles as well. Though I am not a scientist, I think what happens in nature also happens in our bodies. Which is the moral of the story, at least from what I think Mamalu is really trying to say. Everyone had a chance to grow, adapt, and evolve. Those that do, are in effect selected to go onto the next cycle unto continual harmony with creation. Those that do not, well, they are consumed back to nature. Oh, I forgot to mention, Mamalu restores order via the Malaku. A rough translation would be war dogs."

Dr. Numann stands back up and hunches over the microphone,

“Naturally, my follow up question, who are the war dogs and how do we avoid being bitten?”

A chuckle comes from the crowd.

“Ah, the gazillion dollar question.” Jasper replies.

“So yeah, hmm, not to alarm you all but this continues until harmony is restored as I already said. The Malaku are already amongst us, they have always been. The difference is that as Mamalu has had enough of the war, death, violence, greed, and unchanging ways she starts to sing. Her war dogs activate and it begins all over again. There was a recent attack down south when a man started biting another man for no reason at all on the bus. These are small examples but as to when it all starts, I think we are already seeing the signs, at least those of us that have eyes to see.”

“Any other questions for Jasper?” Gloria asks.

Father Frank quietly raises his hand.

[image: Father Frank raising his hand]

“One second, Father Frank,” Gloria says as she walks to the back of the room where Father Frank stands next to Mr. Gabriel.

“As a Catholic priest, I am well aware of this prophecy as we have it in our doctrine, mainly the dead walking again. Is there anything in your lore that suggest the Goddess return similarly as we Christians await for our Lord and Savior Jesus to return towards the time of the end? Or of some kind of rapture where the chosen people are safe from danger?” Concludes Father Frank.

Well, the closest thing I can think of is that we believe that we all have a song, and those in harmony with nature are also in harmony with Mamalu. So we sing the same song, if that makes sense. Look at it this way, if Mamalu is part of the infinite, each of us having a unique song may be just a chord or a melody in this infinite playlist. We don't believe she will return as she has always been here with us, through our song, through nature, through love and brotherhood. The chosen as you suggest will know the time and band together as we always have, no matter who they are, where they are, if we expect to make it into the next cycle. Our teachings suggest it will be the worst time, known as the cleansing. The war dogs are bad enough, can you imagine nature taking back land and giving birth to new land? Not to mention, disease, lack of food and drinkable water. There is some hope, when Mu turns red and the last of the destruction takes place, it will help kill off the Malaku.

Mr. Gabriel gently borrows the mic from Gloria to ask,

"Tell them what they can do to be ready." A voice from the back can be heard.

"Oh hey man, Mr. Gabi! Thanks for having me, you were right, this is fun." says Jasper,

Just then the crowd turns around to look at their boss as if to pay homage.

"Getting ready is tricky since this cycle, as we expect the Mu to turn red and cause a shift in the Earth. Normally, I would say beans, bullets, and band aids, I don't think it will be enough. I think we will have to keep moving this time, like, you can have your spot when it initially goes down, but in order to be a part of the harmony you will have to find it. So you see, the main problem we have in the world now, we're not in harmony since we're not looking for it and are just too busy on stupid stuff like money and the materials it buys.

So, how to be ready? Eat well, sleep well, think well, spend time with your families, learn the basics of primitive man, know your neighbors, interact in your communities. Awareness for all, readiness for all kinds of things which is a major fault for us since we do not talk to each other any longer, no one trusts anyone, and even our governments have plastered everywhere "See something, Say something!" As if we really need to be suspicious of one another, what we need is the complete opposite, trust. We need to trust each other in order to overcome what is upon us. Oh and before I forget, our oral traditions really are centered around adaptation. Basically adapting to your surroundings and learning the "secret of repetition".

For example, we learned about agriculture, from learning about the seasons, and paying attention to the hints nature was giving us. We passed these traditions onto other tribes, and we slowly stopped warring over food as there was plenty to go around."

Adapting to our surroundings is one thing but we must also adapt to each other. The secret of repetition is simple, we continue to do something until we master it and can move onto something else. Finished, Jasper.

Anyone else? Questions please, repeats Gloria.

A small caramel colored hand is raised from the front row. As Gloria walks up to the front row she realizes it's her daughter patiently waiting her turn to question the speaker.

Hi dear, Gloria says to Cassandra as she stands caddy corner from her daughter handing her the mic.

Hi mom, Cassie says giving her mother a hug.

What's up girly, I remember you! Jasper blurts out. Wow that's your mom? Small world! He says.

Hi there, Cassie says with a slight blush on her face. So, I am still a student like I told you in the lobby but after hearing your talk, I am intrigued about the implications of this "prophecy" or teachings for a lack of better wording. As a medical student, I rely on science, to me these myths seem to point to reasons why people are crazy or go crazy. Have you heard of Bell's Mania, or SNAP? Do you think these phenomena and theory have anything to do with people losing it?

Cassie finishes politely by saying "thank you for your response."

Ah, Excited Delirium and Spontaneous Necro-Animation Psychosis. Yeah, I have been studying all these ways that someone can potentially show symptoms. Really, here is what I think, our bodies are just hardware, information that we process is the software. Information comes in many forms, light, sound, colors, and shapes. I think that our brains are supposed to act as a filter to what we consider experience in life. This filtering process is what science calls consciousness. So, as we continue to learn, grow, mature, and advance ourselves in this life, we are also supposed to do so with others. Which is the great balancing of the two opposing forces that come from the Mu or space itself. This duality is literally echoed in all sacred-texts. Some can overcome duality simpler than others, raise their consciousness that is, now keep in mind that just because you are conscious of life, your actions or inaction, it does not predispose you to virtue, since virtue is choice.

In the end, those that did not choose wisely, basically activate as war dogs because they could never bridge the connections in their brains, and throughout their bodies in order to be selected to make it to the next cycle. Remember, harmony starts within each of us and dissipates throughout our lives where we are in perpetual balance with creation and nature itself." I hope this helps, Jasper says.

Cassie, quickly stands back up and says "I have a follow up question."

"Yes?" Jasper says.

"You said selected to the next cycle." Could you please elaborate? Cassie asks.

"Sure." We believe we are the custodians of Black Path. We were chosen to take the knowledge given to us by Mamalu and teach others they way. The Black Path is simply how to walk in the dark, the darkness being the Mu or space itself. This path never ends as the Mu is infinite. We do not affiliate ourselves with the Mu people as they usurped our knowledge and this is where the world received religion. If anything, the Mu people is literally referring to the war dogs when put into proper context.

"So the truth as we see it is that we are all on the Black Path, some realize it, the majority unfortunately never do. We are to lead the blind out of the dark hand-in-hand walking towards infinity. It is hard to say who is selected and who is not, but even animals eat their stillborn, which I think it refers to the occult symbol also taken from my people, the Ouroboros. Again, the cleansing is also the selection process, if that makes sense."

Jasper says.

"Wow." Thank you, Cassie says. I am sorry but I have one more question.

Sure, Jasper says.

What happens after the Mu becomes red and harmony is restored. Cassie asks.

New traditions are created building off of the old ones. People live simply in accordance with basic essentials for living. We all return to nature in perpetual harmony. It will be very bad until we all reach this point, this is why I say be good to each other always. Since we are currently at an imbalance of some people having much more than most people. Balance is restored to where we all have the basics required to live a meaningful life. Learning, creating, and sharing is what we are really all put here to do, somehow we lost our way, well not all of us. This conference is an example of people coming together and sharing their love and passion with others.

From the back of the room, you can see Captain Cross walk up to Mr. Gabriel in his all black fatigues and whisper something in his ear. Mr. Gabriel gives a slight nod and the Captain quietly leaves the room.

Gloria notices and asks "Is everything alright Mr. Gabriel?"

We are squared away, just security updates, he replies.

With a faint smile Gloria says, I am sorry but we will have to move onto the next speaker. Please see Mr. Kelvin in the dining room during our luncheon scheduled for 12:45 P.M. I believe you said, you will be sticking around is that correct Mr. Kelvin?

Oh yeah, I'll be here the entire conference, I am like a kid at a superhero conference except you are all really super! Jasper replies as the audience chuckles. Thanks very much for having me he says as he walks down to take his seat. The audience gives a loud clap as Gloria says yes let's hear it for Jasper Kelvin and his most interesting presentation about our past, present, and future. Gloria says.

Alright, that took a bit longer than usual, you all asked a bunch of questions this go around. Another chuckle can be heard from the audience. So let's take 15 minutes to break, but please for the courtesy of our next speaker do not be late. See you in 15 minutes Gloria says.

The attendees get up move around and start to chatter. Jasper and Cassie can both be seen on opposite ends of the front row on their cell phones texting.

"Yo." the text reads to Della, Jasper's childhood friend.

"Well? How'd it go?" Della replies right away.

"Ah, man." That was badass, everyone was so nice and had a shit-ton of questions. He replies.

"Don't you find it kind of odd how this man hunt you down so you can be the key-note speaker for some type of conference with industry leaders and doctor types? Della types, as she finishes stirring her fresh cup of coffee.

"Yeah, well yeah but I talked to him for a good while the day we met, I'll tell you later." Everything legit so far, he says.

"Well good, he don't want Della to open a can of whoop-ass if anything happens to you, LMAO she writes.

"You ain't right, HAHA! he replies.

Della turns to her boyfriend T and says "Jazz says he had fun and wasn't booed offstage."

T gives a big thumbs up as he finishes his headshot kill on his Snipers vs. Commandos first person shooter game.

"T says Awesome and great job Della replies."

"We both know the meat-head didn't say that, he's probably playing his video gaming and just gave a nod or a thumbs up."